

Vivien SZŐNYI

## Traditional Dance Culture in the Moldavian „Ceangău” Villages

### Rezumat

#### Cultură tradițională a dansului ceangăilor în satele din Moldova

Cultura dansului grupului etnografic moldovenesc al *ceangăilor* aparține dialectului de dans maghiar estic. În anumite sate, oamenii ar putea cunoaște în jur de 30 sau 40 de tipuri de dansuri în linie sau perechi cu figuri simple. Aceste dansuri strofice, dansuri cu motive repetate și structuri periodice, ar putea să-și aibă originea în interacțiunile românești, moldovenești, bulgare, ucrainene, germane și poloneze. Autorul a cercetat grupul etnografic romano-catolic *ceangăii* de origine maghiară în Moldova, ca parte a României din 2012. În timpul lucrărilor în teren, autorul a vizitat mai multe comunități din județul Bacău și s-a concentrat asupra sistemului lor social, a dansului și a repertoriului de dans. În prezent, în calitate de doctorand, analizează schimbările formale, stilistice, funcționale și de conținut ale dansurilor doar într-un singur sat, numit Arini, în perioada 1940–2010. În afară de aceasta, ar dori să primească răspuns la următoarele întrebări: a) Cum ar putea fi conectată cultura dansului cu comunitatea locală?; b) Ce fel de efecte au procesele macro și micro-istorice asupra dansului ca o practică socioculturală complexă?; c) Cum putem aplica teoria funcționalismului structural în timpul unei cercetări antropologice a dansului?.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Moldova, *Ceangău*, dansuri tradiționale, funcționalism structural, antropologia dansului, dans folcloric, analiza schimbărilor.

### Summary

#### Traditional Dance Culture in the Moldavian „Ceangău” Villages

The dance culture of Moldavian *Ceangău* ethnographic group belongs to the Eastern Hungarian dance dialect. In certain villages, people could be familiar with 30 or 40 types of chain and couple dances with simple structures. The origin of these strophic, motive repeating dances with periodical structures could be traced back to Romanian, Moldavian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, German and Polish interactions. I have researched the *Ceangău* Roman Catholic ethnographic group with Hungarian origin in Moldova as part of Romania since 2012. During the fieldworks, I have visited more communities in Bacău County, and I focused on their social system, dance life and dance repertoire. In present as doctoral student, I analyse the formal, stylistic, functional, and contentual changes of dances in only one village, it is called Arini, in the period of 1940'–2010'. Beside this, I would like to get answer to the following questions: a) How the dance culture and the local community could be connected?; b) What kind of effects have the macro and micro historical processes got to the dance as a complex sociocultural practice?; c) How can we apply the theory of structural functionalism during a dance anthropological research?.

**Keywords:** Moldova, *Ceangău*, traditional dances, structural functionalism, dance anthropology, dance folkloristic, analysis of changes.

In the article, I try to introduce the general features of Moldavian *Ceangău* dance culture and my doctoral research project in *Bacău* County, Romania. First, the field of research, the examined ethnographic group and their traditional dances could be read. In the second part of paper, I would like to present the main subject, the methodology and the framework interpretation of research, the dance life and dance repertoire of *Arini* village, as well as the main problems of the classification and the analysis of dances. Beside this, the aim of the article is the raising attention for the possibility of a comparative international research project.

### The Field of Research: Moldova

I started the research in 2012, in *Bacău* County, which belongs to the northeastern region of Romania. The examined region, Moldova (*Moldva* in Hungarian), as the part of Romania is extending from the Eastern-Carpathians to Prut river and it is bordered by Bukovina in north and by the Sub-Danube and the Black Sea in south [11, p. 7-8].

Here lives the Roman Catholic, so called *Ceangău* (*Csángó* in Hungarian) ethnic group of Hungarian origin, but for today, it has already assimilated to Moldavian Romanians. The first groups of *Ceangău* people migrated from Transylvania to Moldova in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries because of military service, and they got territories with *răzeș* status (privilege). They do not compose a consistent ethnographic group; they could be separated into smaller units based on ethnical and regional aspects.

Their identity, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has been assuming features of the Middle Ages. They have not taken part in the development of Hungarian embourgeoisement that is why their identity is different from Hungarians living in the Carpathian-Basin. Their identity is determined on the basis of two factors: a) religion: as Roman Catholics they are separated from the neighbouring Orthodox Romanians; b) local identity [11, p. 148-149]. Nowadays, approximately 240.000 *Ceangău* people live in the Eastern Romania, but from them just 40.000 people speak Hungarian language with archaic dialect [3, p. 127].

### Traditional Dances of Moldavian *Ceangău* People

The Moldavian *Ceangău* traditional culture is well known from the side of Hungarian ethnographic research [4], but their dance culture had never been in the focus of ethnographers and anthropologists. We have only some data about the *Ceangău* dances thanks to the scientific work of György Martin [8], Anikó Péterbencze [10], Ildikó Sándor [12] and Vivien

Szőnyi [13; 14; 15], but their traditional music culture is more researched by István Pávai [9] and Daniel Lipták [7]. According to determination of György Martin, the dance culture of *Ceangău* ethnographic group from Moldova belongs to the eastern Hungarian dance dialect. Dances main features are: medieval collectivity and settled structure; additionally, dance repertoire could be divided into three groups: circle dances, transition between circle and couple dances and couple dances. In certain villages, people could be familiar with 30 or 40 types of chain and couple dances with simple structures. The origin of these strophic, motive repeating dances with periodical structures could be traced back to Balkan, Romanian, Moldavian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, German and Polish interactions [8, p. 127-129].

### The Current Doctoral Research Project

The doctoral research is engaged in the transformation and the social function of dance culture in only one village, it is called *Arini* (*Magyarfalu* in Hungarian). *Arini*, where all members of the community are able to speak the Hungarian language, belongs to the community of *Găiceana*, 50 kilometres from *Bacău* city. The village's dance life and dance repertoire is examined in context of more sociocultural phenomenon on micro and macro level from the 1940' till the 2010'. I am interested in not only the formal, stylistic, functional, and contentual changes of dances [13; 14], but also the complex dance culture, which includes the organization of dance occasions, the proprieties and customs of dancing, musicians, gender roles, mentality and behaviour during the dance practice.

With the help of research results, I try to find answers to the following questions:

- a) How the dance culture and the society are connected?
- b) What kind of effects have the macro and micro historical processes got to the *dance* as a complex sociocultural system?
- c) What is the function of dance culture? How can we apply the theory of the structural functionalism during a dance anthropological research?

According to my hypothesis, the dancing is a community-based and controlled sociocultural practice, which relates to defined time, place and participants. Symbolically it could refer to the social system of community, and it contributes to the continuity of social structure with the communal representation, the intensification and the validation of social relations in *Arini* village.

More historical, political and sociocultural processes had an effect on dance culture of *Arini* vil-

lage on macro level. Such as the pursuit of political system in power and Roman Catholic church [15, p. 192-194], the forced industrialization, the collectivization or the intention of linguistic and cultural assimilation; after the regime change: the labour migration, the secularization, the technical modernization and change of the musical and dance trends. The local dance culture was formed by factors of micro level too. The local church, the Hungarian school, the generations and the individualities (for examples: the dance organizer lads, the priest, the tradition preservers or the mayor) could act the part of the cultural transformation.

In pursuance of my hypothesis, the dance culture's social function is not the same in every time in the social system, its function has periodical importance, which is determined by changing of dance's social value. According to my observation, nowadays the dancing has not such a significant social value in the community life, than it had between the 1950' and the 1970' in *Arini*. The young people apply recent sociocultural practices to contribution of social system's continuity (for example the *Facebook* application is the foremost among these practices).

### Methodology

During the research, I collect relevant data from the historical and ethnographical archives in Hungary; and I interpret empirical data from the field. In the last five years, I engaged in more fieldworks with several weeks or months, together with one year-long participant observation in Moldova. As a participant observer, I have been trying to take part in the life and working processes of my informants. During the fieldworks, I kept a field diary; I made semi-structured interviews, thick descriptions, photos and videos about the dance occasions, the dancers, musicians and the traditional customs. During the interpretation, I try to present the changes in

the dance culture of *Arini* village in emic approach, namely in the way of how local people think.

### Framework Interpretation

The research is determined by holistic approach. In pursuance of this, I would not like to interpret a cultural phenomenon in itself, but in its context. In addition, the framework interpretation of research is based on three approaches: **1)** according to the theory of the structural functionalism, which stems from A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, the society means an integrated complex, in which every socio-cultural phenomenon has function, because of the maintenance of social balance [2, p. 4-5; p. 14-15]. **2)** I try to apply some elements from this theory during the dance research, in this way I interpret the *dancing* as a sociocultural practice [6, p. 140-143]. I suppose this practice is in connection with the historical, political, economical and sociocultural processes, which have effects to the local community on micro and macro levels. **3)** And final, according to the dance folkloristic approach, I regard the formal, stylistic, functional and contentual dance analysis as a research tool, which could give more information about the mentality, the moral, the taste, the facility of the cultural adaptation or about the social system of community [5, p. 75-76].

### The Dance Life of *Arini*

The 'dance life' means the social context of dance culture, which includes many cultural and social aspects around the dance occasions (e.g. the organization, the proprieties, the musicians' relationship with the village, and the participants of dances). In *Arini* the main dance occasions were organized at the time of calendar holydays, such as at Christmas, New Year, Epiphany (6<sup>th</sup> of January), Carnival time (before the fast), Easter, Pentecost and Patron Saint's Day, which is on 8<sup>th</sup> of September in the vil-



1. A Ceangău family from *Galbeni (Trunk)* village in 1931. (by Veress Sándor, Museum of Ethnography, Hungary, Nr. F64533)



2. Circle dance in *Cleja (Klészse)* village from 1931. (by Veress Sándor, Museum of Ethnography, Hungary, Nr. F64520)

lage. Beside this, some regular dance occasions existed too, such as the 'tánc' or 'guzsalyas'. The occasion of 'tánc', which means 'dance' in Hungarian, was in every Sunday's afternoon in the centre of village at the spring and summer time. At nights of autumn and winter the 'guzsalyas' was organized, which was a type of bee, when girls were spinning clothes and the other textiles, as well as they were singing and dancing with lads.

Final, we could refer to the dance occasions, which connected to the family celebrations, such as the christening, engagement, and wedding with three days, sometimes the name day or birthday. In present, we can meet with traditional dances just in the dance occasions of New Year, Patron Saint's Day and weddings in *Arini* village.

The organizer of dance occasions was a group with three or four young lads from the village. The leader was the 'vatáb', who was voted by other lads for one year. He had to organize the Gypsy musicians, had to control the all dance occasion, and he collected the money (entrance ticket) from the participant dancers. The participants of dances were unmarried young people from the village. The married or old people could dance just in the occasion of wedding. The musicians were Gypsies from *Băcioiu* village with different instruments: violin, kobza, cimbalom, drum, accordion or fanfare band.

This general description about dance life of *Arini* continuously changed because of the mentioned historical, economical and sociocultural processes, as well as because of cultural adaptation. The cultural transformation happened with different dynamics and it depended on the adaptation facility of the generations.

### The Dance Repertoire of *Arini*

We could know more about the dance repertoire of *Ceangău* ethnographic group thanks to the



3. Couple dance from *Valea Seacă (Bogdánfalva)* village in 1932. (by Lükő Gábor, Museum of Ethnography, Hungary, Nr. F67739)

Archive and Department of Traditional Music and Dance at the Institute for Musicology in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences [1]. Based on archive and my own collected material, I would like to introduce the Moldavian *Ceangău* dances in four groups: 1) circle dances, which mean the biggest and most significant group; 2) couple dances; 3) line dances; and 4) solo dances, which usually connected to the main ritual customs. The most of dance names could be read in Romanian, and just few in Hungarian, in the way of how local people name these.

#### Circle dances:

alunelu, ardeleanca, botoșanca, ca la cort, ca la ușa cortului, chezeasca, corăgheasca, cosorel, florica, garofița, hangu, **kezes** (hora), hora bătută, hora ca la băță, hora unirii, Leliță Ioană, lugoianca, **öves** (brăul), perinița, rața, sârba, sârba militară, sârba studențească, sfredelușu, zdrăboleanca.

#### Couple dances:

cărăselu, baraboi, brașovianca, **csárdás** (ciardaș), cimpoiasca, hora de doi, hora/jocul miresei, malagamba, **seprús** sau **măturița** (dance with broom), mușamaua, podu, polka, ruseasca, sârba, tangău, vals.

#### Line dances:

bulgăreasca, penguin, sârba ofițerilor.

#### Solo dances:

hora bătută, **kecskés** (turca sau capra), jocul găinii, marș la nuntă, **medvés** (urs), **cigányos** (țigăneasca)

We could meet with many problems during the creation of dance repertoire's classification. First, what does "traditional dance" mean? How can we describe this term? During the observation of dances, I interpreted as traditional dance, which is survival or revival of the peasant culture from the 1940' until the 1960'. In my interpretation, survival can keep their continuity through the tradition and



4. Circle dance from *Cleja (Klészse)* village in 1931. The organizer lads stand on the veranda next to the musicians in the background. (by Veress Sándor, Museum of Ethnography, Hungary, Nr. F64521)



revival was retaught after the 1990' by the effects of tradition preservation activities.

We should find the base of dance culture's classification. It could be many structural, functional, stylistic or contentual elements of dances, the dance music, the ethnical or social origin of dance, etc. The origin of traditional dance and music culture of Eastern Romania, Moldova (Bessarabia) and Bukovina is a complex question, thanks to multiethnic area. Many ethnic groups could be found in this region, such as Bulgarians, Hungarians, Gagauz, Germans,

Gypsies, Moldavians, Polishes, Romanians, Russians, Ukrainians and Turkish. Until now, the dance culture was not in the focus of ethnographic researches, so we have just few information about this unique cultural heritage. In my opinion, this dance culture is a common cultural heritage, and we (all members of these ethnics) are the inheritors of this tradition. For this reason, I hope we can start together an ethnographic research project, which could define and interpret the place of this multiethnic traditional dance and music culture on the cultural map of Europe.

### ***Bibliographical references***

1. Fügedi J. (ed.). Knowledge Base of Traditional Dances. Institute for Musicology, Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Online Data Base: [http://db.zti.hu/neptanc\\_tudastar/index\\_en.asp](http://db.zti.hu/neptanc_tudastar/index_en.asp); the date of last download: 05.07.2017.

2. Hollós M. Bevezetés a kulturális antropológiába. Budapest: ELTE BTK Kulturális Antropológiai Szakcsoport, 1995.

3. Ilyés S., Peti L., Pozsony F (eds.). Moldvai csángók 1990–2010. A Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság Értesítője. Vol. 16, Nr. 1–2, Kolozsvár: Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság, 2010.

4. Ilyés S., Pozsony F., Tánczos V. (eds.). A moldvai csángók bibliográfiája. 2006, Online Publication: <http://csangobibliografia.adatbank.transindex.ro/bibl.php?a=bibl>; the date of last download: 05.07.2017.

5. Kavecsánszki M. Tánc és politika. Szempontok a tánc kultúra és a politikai akaratképzés közötti kapcsolat értelmezéséhez. In: Híd. Nr. 3, 2014, p. 74-89.

6. Kürti L. Antropológiai gondolatok a táncról. In: Zakariás Erzsébet (ed.). Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság Évkönyve 3. Kolozsvár: Kriza János Néprajzi Társaság, 1995, p. 137-153.

7. Lipták D. Egy moldvai csángó hegedűs dallamkincse. In: Folkszemle, 2012, Online Publication: [http://www.folkradio.hu/folkszemle/liptak\\_moldvaihegedus/index.php](http://www.folkradio.hu/folkszemle/liptak_moldvaihegedus/index.php); the date of last download: 05.07.2017.

8. Martin G. Magyar tánc típusok és tánc dialektusok. Budapest: Planétás Kiadó, 1996.

9. Pávai I. Az erdélyi és moldvai magyarság népi tánc zenéje. Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1993.

10. Péterbencze A. Adatok a moldvai csángók folklórjához – Táncok és táncos szokások a Bákó környéki falvakban. In: Péterbecze Anikó (ed.). „Moldovának szíp táiaind születem...” Magyarországi Csángó Fesztivál és Konferencia. Jászberény, 1993, p. 68-90.

11. Pozsony F. A moldvai csángó magyarok. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó–Európai Folklór Intézet, 2005.

12. Sándor I. A hangszerkészlet és a táncélet változása Klézsén. In: Ethnographia. Vol. 106, Nr. 2, 1995, p. 927-936.

13. Szőnyi V. A magyarországi tánc házmozgalom hatása egy moldvai csángó település tánc kultúrájára. In: Vajda Zoltán (ed.). Tehetségek a tudomány horizontján. Válogatás a Szegedi Tudományegyetem Bölcsészettudományi Kara hallgatóinak tudományos munkáiból. Szeged: SZTE BTK, 2014, p. 295-309.

14. Szőnyi V. A moldvai csángó magyar táncok funkcionális és formai-stiláris változásai. In: Bolvári-Takács Gábor (ed.). ALKOTÁS – BEFOGADÁS – KRITIKA a tánc művészetben, a tánc pedagógiában és a tánc kutatásban. Budapest: Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola, 2014, p. 180-188.

15. Szőnyi V. Hatalom és erkölcs a moldvai csángó tánc kultúrában. In: Bolvári-Takács Gábor (ed.). Tánc és Társadalom. Budapest: Magyar Táncművészeti Főiskola, 2016, p. 190-196.

### **The Sources of Photos**

Photos: Tálás Ágnes Judit (ed.). Moldvai táncok – Klézse, Somoska. A Kárpát-medence táncos öröksége sorozat IV, Oktatási segédanyag–DVD, Budapest: Hagyományok Háza, 2009.